

modern world. In the first place Hobbes assumes, as a matter of course, that the people are the sole source of power. Secondly, he cares nothing for feudal rights or class privileges, and regards all subjects as equal in the eye of the sovereign, or, as we should now say, in the eye of the law. Thirdly, and still more important, his doctrine of unfettered sovereignty, which seemed so extravagant even to seventeenth-century Englishmen, is adaptable to different circumstances. Though he prefers monarchy for its simplicity, he repeatedly declares that the sovereign may equally well be a small group or an assembly. His mission was to combat the division of power. With whom it rested was of minor significance : what mattered was that it should be in vigorous hands. Thus a doctrine which sounded preposterous when applied to Charles I or Cromwell wears a different aspect when predicated of a truly representative assembly. The division of power between the Stuart kings and their Parliaments, with a good deal of tradition behind their respective claims, was undoubtedly a source of danger, and the only means of overcoming it was to settle which should give way. The Revolution of 1688 having finally decided against the King, the House of Commons gradually came to be regarded as the main expression of the national will. This adaptability distinguishes his position from his royalist contemporaries, like Filmer, and preserves a portion of his influence. Yet he would be disappointed if he revisited England to-day. For the King has ceased to rule, the Cabinet is subordinate to the House of Commons, and the latter obeys the will of a changing electorate. That the ultimate power should rest with the ill-educated masses who form the majority of voters would not be at all to his taste. More-

over, our system of checks and balances, visible  
arid invisible,  
including an independent judiciary and an  
uncensored press,  
sins against the rigorous logic of his creed.

When Hobbes made his peace with the  
Commonwealth he  
acted in accordance with his own teaching.  
Directly the  
sovereign ceased to be able to protect his  
subjects, his claim  
to their allegiance was gone. Though  
*leviathan* was not  
written in the interests of the Commonwealth,  
and merely  
embroidered the message of his earlier books,  
its counsels of  
submission to a *de facto* government were  
highly opportune.  
He preferred Cromwell to the Rump; in  
1656, he claimed  
credit for turning the minds of a thousand  
gentlemen to a  
conscientious obedience to the government  
which otherwise